

Peace of Our Time- North Waziristan

Abstract. After fourteen long years of war, the peace talks have been initiated between government and Taliban in February 2014 amidst an air of mistrust in which different segments of society voicing their reservation about the end and insisting upon the military actions¹. This article analyse the Pathan insurgency on a historical basis with on field research to draw a balance between the choices of peace and war along North western frontier with North Waziristan as case study.

Introduction. British came into contact with the tribes west of Indus after the annexation of Punjab in 1849 and with that they naturally took over the territories under the control of Lahore Darbar which included Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Tank, Hazara, to name few, these areas were administratively governed through a system which was already in place where British East India Company was having the control, namely a commissioner, two deputy commissioners, civil judge and revenue department apart from usual assortment of police. There was one major change from the past experience of the company, now they were confront with the frontier about which they had little knowledge. In east the company had faced the similar situation when they had conquered the Bengal a jungle borne country, with primitive tribes like Chakma, in the north the BEIC had a faceoff with Gurkhas another mountainous tribes therefore by any logic company should not have any trouble in dealing with the tribes living west of its territories ; history bears different verdict whereas there was not much of violence involved on the east and north the conflict on North West has not diminished despite the passage of a century, a natural query is why is it so ?

The theoretical framework is based upon grounded theory, on field research, primary sources, and interviews and then the data itself speaks out. The classic class clash theory is not applicable as the later data would reveal rather the 'Clash of Civilisation' and 'Martial race 'are more pertinent.

History is paramount in understanding the culture and behaviour of the people especially of North Western Frontier region, the area under focus is currently described as FATA{Federally Administered Tribal Area} which by itself is a grave misnomer. British after the 1857 Revolution or War of independence , which failed manly due to the help and fighting spirit of Pathan tribes of settled areas.

Frontier

Frontier is different from border or boundary as it imples freedom of movement across it. India's westrn frontiers were drawn , first in 1809 when the boundary was drawn between the Persia and Kalat later rectified under Goldsmaid Line in 1863 which also draws the limit of Afganhinstan and kalat ; in 1893 the Durand – Abdur Rehman agreement defined the eastern spkere of Afghanistan . In north the India's frontier with China were agreed upon in 1911 under Machan Line. British thus brought the West Phallian concept of state in the sub continent with a Machiavillian frame work. Much of the initial British officials belonged to the Idealist school like Lawrence Brothers and there were realist like Durand family with positivists like Robertsons. The agreement thus emerged as a classic and one of the most important document of Sub continent alongwith Proclamation of 1947. Durand agreement was demarcated in 1896 and certain portions of it , the Kunar – Khyber portion has not been ddemarcated . There are remanats of the pillars along the Durand Line, each pillar is marked in continuation of its area and not with the serial numbers , thus between Ghulam hassan and Tochi pass the pillars are from I – XVII and between Zhob –Wanna they are I –XV. This ambiguity has left an ambuity between the two states ; tribes are not concerned with the formalities. The tribe in case of

¹ In MPhil class of 20 students at NDU, 19 favoured military action, survey 17 March 2014.

Madda Khel near pillar number IX in Tochi, have their water and grazing ground inside the Afghanistan therefore to expect them to have the visa formalities is asking bit too much.

British had declared the six districts as settled areas and all the area west of these settled areas were taken as Tribal Belt. In the first phase which lasted between the first two Anglo- Afghan Wars the British tried to settle the tribes rather pacify them using tick and carrot. On one hand Mahsud Tribes was given lands to settle on the plains of Western Indus under the Dera Ghazi Khan commissarite and on other hand no less than sixteen expedition were carried out against them. The first major expedition took place at Ambella , east of Peshawar and till 1897 the focus remained on the area north of Peshawar it was only after the Durand Line agreement that focus was shifted to the Waziristan.

FATA is a group of six political agencies on the north western border of Pakistan which are part of the province but are administratively run by the federal government where President appoints the political agent who is answerable to him, this is how these political agencies were evolved with the very first Khyber Agency being formed in 1878, Kurram in 1892, North and South Waziristan in 1895, Bajaur and Mohmand were formed in 1970 and 1974, the last political agency was formed in 1975 when Orakzai agency was carved out of the Kurram Agency. There are other troubled areas like Swat and Dir state which were part of over 540 princely state Indian states before 1947 and later they acceded to Pakistan, some by wish other by force, another important state is Chitral which was also among those princely states and later acceded to Pakistan in 1947. Among the Pakistan North western frontier the Gilgit and Skardu have a special place , they were independent states but later they were conquered by the Dogra Kashmir troops in 1849 onwards and they after the independence, carried out war of independence and after claiming their independence for a brief period acceded to Pakistan and Gilgit thus became the very first agency which was raised by Pakistan. Two other minor but strategic important states like Hunza and Nagar also acceded to Pakistan.

Thus it can be seen that the composition and demography along with history and culture of the people living on the east of Durand line {Pakistan} is not homogenous in nature rather they vary in their language for instance Chitral having 414 kilometres of border with Afghanistan speaks Chitral which is not spoken by other tribes living south and along the border. Broadly speaking the area can be fragmented into either, princely states and independent tribes, Chitral was a princely state and rest all were independent tribes, in this regard the area south of Chitral which is present day Bajaur Agency was part of Dir State. Other category is to divide the tribes and states on the basis of the sect they are following, all less two areas are Sunni faith , Shia faith is in Chitral and in Kurram Agency, even among these the Chitral have a predominant Ismaili faith followers. There is another prominent feature among these tribes along the Frontier, some of them are termed as Cross –Frontier and other as Cis Frontier, which implies that certain tribes are living on both side of the Durand line like Afridi which have Zakkha Khel on both side of the frontier, Wazir is another tribe which have their clansmen at Khost and Gardez which are now part of Afghanistan.

The root of all these is in history and more particularly in the Frontier demarcation of 1893, the Durand Agreement fulfils the strategic requirement of then India and now Pakistan as all the passes are under control, Kurram salient is almost like a dagger pointing towards the Kabul, which is mere 80 miles away from the Pakistan , the shortest distance between the Afghan capital and Pakistan territory.

Geographically the area from the Burzul Pass or even further North where three empires meet {Russia, China and Britain } till 1947 and which is now inherited by Pakistan, a strip of twenty odd miles separate Pakistan from Russia. The ground descends southwards with River Kunar forming the frontier and it is the rivers which inextricably forms the frontier and geographic entity, Kunar joins River Kabul near Khyber pass and divides Mohmand agency from Khyber Pass, another major river is Kurram river which flows south of Khyber pass separated by the Safeed Koh mountain which is the highest point of Durand Line. The area between the Safeed Koh ridge in south to the Kabul River in north is inhabited by a single tribe namely Afridi, they in fact control two strategic passes namely Khyber which leads to Afghanistan and Adam Khel which connects Peshawar vale to the Waziristan.

Area between the Kurram river and Zhob river was regarded as Waziristan by British, in past it was also known as Khorasan, it is district from the Peshawar vale. In Waziristan , from north the very first valley is Kurram valley which runs from Kohat to Parachinar, Till Kohat it is termed as settled areas and from Kohat till Parachinar it is Kurram political agency, which itself is divided into lower, upper and central Kurram. The major cause of violence here is sectarian, with Shia in majority in upper Kurram and Sunni in lower and central Kurram. Turi is the only Shia following faith tribe among the Pashtu speaking tribes, apart from them there are Bangash and Orakzai tribes which have clans adhering to Sunni and Shia faith separately. This valley is different from other vales of Waziristan as the number of tribes are much numerous although the numerical superiority still lies with the wazir. The current population of the agency is 3,85,000 out of which 48% are Shia , on the other hand the Shia or Turi are over 87% in upper Kurram. Turis themselves are divided into two main sections , one which follow the traditional and heirachical descendants of Prophet{pbuh} family known as Dre Mandi and other section is known as Mian Mir which follows an syed coming from the adjoining Afridi Tirah valley.

The major river in Waziristan al have origin in Afghanistan namely, Kaitu and Tochi which later both join and falls into Indus. Waziristan itself represents a major variation in geography with northern Waziristan between Kurram – Tochi almost a desert, bare and void of vegetation and aridale land, Miranshah, Spinwam, Shewa are the major town in the agency and Bannu is the major city in settled areas which act as motherboard for North Waziristan agency. The agency itself was formed in 1895 when Waziristan was divided into North and South Waziristan. Shawal or Razmak is in centre having an elevation of 6000 feet and it is also the boundary between the Wazir and Mahsud tribes. Mahsud tribe thus inhabit south Waziristan extending south to the Suleiman Koh and towards the Indus in east with tank as the major frontier town which at one time was ruled by the nawab of tank paying tribute first to Kabul and later to Ranjeet Singh.

The area along the western bank of River Indus from Suleiman Koh to Bannu plains is also inhabited by the Pathan tribes namely Marwat, Bhittani and Khattak.

Cycle of Violence 1820-2014

The cycle of violence among the Pathan tribes can be broadly classified into three main time period each having its own distinct characteristics, the first phase was the Syed Ahmed Shaheed and his followers' waging a war against the Sikhs in the Peshawar and its surrounding areas mainly towards the east among the Yousafzai and Uthman Khel. It is in this period that the other Pathan tribes of Khyber, Kurram and Waziristan remained aloof from this insurgency and the Punjabi militants emerged on the scene , these Punjabi mujahedeen came from Delhi and from Sind and they had the command of various groups among the many in Syed Ahmed Shaheed's followers. Wahhabbi factor also became prominent as the mentor of Ahmed Shaheed was shah Wali Ullah who attended the same madrasah as did the Ibn Wahab and probably both came face to face with each other. Wahhabbi faction is no different from other Muslim sects, they differ in one major manner they detest the graves and shrines something which is a central part of Shia belief and also of many other Sunni sects. This phase which started from 1820 lasted well into Ambella campaign of 1863 in the Buner, Mardan areas astride the western banks of river Indus spreading into Lower and Upper Dir and Swat vales

It was again in this area in 1897 when Mullah Haddi aroused people on the basis of religion and led an insurgency which later engulfed the other Pathan tribes but it is a misnomer and an illusion to group the overall Pathan insurgency of 1897 under one leadership; in Tochi valley the issue was not religion and neither it had any link with the Mullah Haddi rather an isolated incident at Datta Khel ignited the powder keg. The insurgency thus had two distinct centres namely one at Waziristan where it was led y Mullah Powindah himself a Wazir and other at Malakand under Mullah Haddi, Afridi and Orakzai tribes were fighting in their own strong holds at Tirah and Mammuzai, the insurgency was

put under control before the end of the century and resultantly new militias were raised which included Chitral in 1903, North and South Waziristan in 1900, Kurram militia in 1902. One key feature of the 1897 insurgency was the lack of involvement on part of the Shia tribes and this pattern is still in vogue.

Militia, Rifles and Scouts

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The newly raised militia which was known as scouts, rifles or simply as militia was a new experiment on part of the British government, raising of new province NWFP which was now taken out from the Punjab Government and placed under a commissioner directly answerable to viceroy, officers were all from regular army on a deputation and men all Pathan from settled and tribal agencies. Regular army was also a special cadre, the old Sikh army after 1849 was first converted into PIFFER and later in 1883 were brought at par with other regular Indian army units. In 1922 another experiment was carried out with the raising of three Pathan territorial battalions. Apart from mere organisation the fundamental strength was the unification of political and military power under one office, in majority of the cases the political officer was from army and beside being a political agent was also the commandant of the militia or scouts, Captain Ross Keppel was the political agent and commandant of Kurram Militia in 1899-1904, same holds true for North Waziristan and for other political agencies. In 1907 Frontier Corps was raised, a headquarter was established at Peshawar with Lieutenant Colonel Bacon as the first secretary, at that time it was looking after and coordinating the militia all along the western frontier including militia in Baluchistan {Zhob, Kalat and Chagai} it was in 1974 that Baluchistan Frontier corps was made independent.

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